United Nations S/PV.4025

Security Council

Fifty-fourth Year

Provisional

4025th Meeting
Monday, 26 July 1999, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Hasmy	(Malaysia)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Petrella
	Bahrain	Mr. Buallay
	Brazil	Mr. Fonseca
	Canada	Mr. Fowler
	China	Mr. Qin Huasun
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Gabon	Mr. Dangue Réwaka
	Gambia	Mr. Jagne
	Namibia	Mr. Andjaba
	Netherlands	Mr. Hamer
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Slovenia	Mr. Türk
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Richmond
	United States of America	Mr. Burleigh

Agenda

Promoting peace and security: humanitarian assistance to refugees in Africa

99-85612 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of King Hassan II of the Kingdom of Morocco

The President: On behalf of the Security Council, I should like to express profound grief and sorrow at the death of His Majesty King Hassan II of the Kingdom of Morocco. King Hassan's entire life was dedicated to devoted service to his country and to the cause of world peace, stability and prosperity. His loss will be greatly felt.

On behalf of the Security Council, I should like to convey to His Majesty King Sidi Mohamed VI, the bereaved family and the people of the Kingdom of Morocco the Council's profound condolences.

I now invite the members of the Council to rise and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of His Majesty King Hassan II of the Kingdom of Morocco.

The members of the Security Council observed a minute of silence.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Promoting peace and security: humanitarian assistance to refugees in Africa

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, if I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Security Council decides to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mrs. Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I welcome Mrs. Ogata and invite her to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, to whom it has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure.

I now give the floor to Mrs. Ogata.

Mrs. Ogata (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees): I, too, would like to start by expressing my profound sorrow and condolences on the passing of the late King of Morocco, King Hassan II. We had many direct and indirect contacts with His Majesty over the Western Sahara issue. I wanted to start my statement by expressing my sorrow.

I am grateful, as always, Mr. President, for your interest and support. On 5 May, when at the peak of the crisis in the Balkans I last briefed the Council, I spoke of the plight of refugees from Kosovo. At that time, I was requested also to provide a briefing on other humanitarian situations, particularly in Africa. Today, therefore, I will focus on that continent, and especially on Central and West Africa, where there have been political and security developments with important humanitarian implications.

As the head of an office which spends over 40 per cent of its resources in Africa, and having personally visited West Africa in February and Central Africa last month, I shall provide the Council with a first-hand perspective on problems of human displacement on the continent. My impressions of the last summit of the Organization of African Unity, which I attended in Algiers two weeks ago, are a good starting point.

I found this year's summit, the seventh such gathering to which I have been invited as observer, particularly encouraging. Like Secretary-General Kofi Annan, I sensed a real spirit of openness and noted positive signs that existing problems could be solved. In attendance were the newly, democratically elected Presidents of South Africa and Nigeria. It was a powerful symbol that these two key African countries are ready to provide an essential contribution to peace, democratization and economic development throughout the continent. This year's host country for the summit, Algeria, may also be auspiciously emerging from nine years of internal instability under the direction of a new president. Another remarkable feature of the summit was that it took place at the same time as a ceasefire agreement on the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and a peace agreement between the Government and rebel forces in Sierra Leone were being signed.

We should be realistic: there will be delays and setbacks in the advancement towards peace and prosperity, but for the first time in years I felt that the election of some remarkable leaders, their presence at the summit and developments on the ground marked a hope for progress. From the perspective of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), these positive steps towards peace raise hopes that many refugees will eventually return home.

The challenge before us is to act rapidly to support the implementation of political agreements. Since the signature of the initial ceasefire agreement on 24 May, for example, hostilities have not resumed in Sierra Leone. From UNHCR's perspective, both agreements may be rare coincidences of opportunities which, if properly and quickly seized by the international community, may lead to the resolution of some of the worst refugee problems in Africa. There are about 6 million people "of concern" to my Office on the continent. If you analyse a "map of human displacement", you will clearly see that people in flight are invariably an indicator of situations of poverty or conflict or a combination of both.

The main refugee groups caused by recent crises continue to be the over half a million Sierra Leoneans in West Africa, the 260,000 Burundians in Tanzania and the 150,000 people who have fled conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to various countries. As we speak, people are fleeing the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to Gabon. There are older, unresolved conflict situations which produced refugees many years ago: more than 370,000 Sudanese are still refugees in Uganda and Ethiopia; 120,000 Saharan refugees are still in camps in Algeria and other countries; and there are 150,000 Angolan refugees, mostly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Tens of thousands of these are actually newly arrived people fleeing fresh fighting in their country. In both Sudan and Angola, as well as in war-torn areas on the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea, there are also tens of thousands of internally displaced people. In Liberia, where 280,000 refugees have returned home and where we hope to finish the repatriation of the remaining quarter of a million by mid-year 2000, recent episodes of insecurity betray internal tensions and the fragility of peace.

In February, when I visited Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, hopes for a settlement in Sierra Leone were still very fragile. I therefore welcome the recent Lomé agreement, although the road to peace is undoubtedly going to be long and difficult. The end of the civil war in Sierra Leone may bring about a positive solution to the worst current refugee problem in Africa, the plight of over half a million people — about 10 per cent of the entire Sierra Leonean population — who have fled violence and fighting in various waves in the last few years. Most of them have taken refuge in Guinea and Liberia, which, in spite of their very limited resources, have generously provided asylum to this large refugee population, a true example to the international community. Sierra Leonean refugees, as has been frequently reported to the Council, have suffered unspeakable violence during the conflict. I have rarely seen consequences of physical and psychological violence as horrifying as those affecting civilians who survived killings and were lefttraumatized by beatings, amputations and rape.

My first key message here today is therefore a plea for all necessary resources to be provided to Sierra Leone and Governments in the subregion so that the Lomé agreement can be implemented, and implemented very rapidly. Peace is at hand, but, especially seen from the vantage point of hundreds of villages, it is still exposed to violence, pillaging and retaliation and is very fragile. From the humanitarian perspective, resources will soon be needed to support the return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced people in their communities of origin. This is of paramount importance because the violence of the Sierra Leonean conflict has created deep divisions and mistrust. As we see in other situations, the longer people stay away from their communities, the more difficult and complex reconciliation becomes. Repatriation will take time, but we must, of course, get prepared for it as quickly as possible, while continuing to assist refugees and local communities hosting them in countries of asylum.

I would also like to take this opportunity to make a special appeal to help those — thousands, unfortunately — who have suffered physical amputations. My visit to a centre for the rehabilitation of amputees from Sierra Leone, last February in Guinea, was one of the most shocking experiences of my eight years as High Commissioner. Their courageous efforts to learn again to walk, eat and write deserve special attention and sustained support.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Lusaka agreement, although not yet signed by all parties, is a welcome development for which Governments in the region should be commended. It is not only immediately important as a positive step towards resolving conflict in

Central Africa, it is also an encouraging indication that peace in Africa can be attained when African leaders are committed to work together towards this goal, in spite of all differences and difficulties. As with the Lomé agreement, however, it is now imperative that the Lusaka agreement receive strong, clear, international support, so that all parties to the conflict adhere to it and so that its rapid implementation can become a reality. In spite of the progress made, war has not ended: witness the recent influx into the Central African Republic of thousands of Congolese fleeing fresh fighting in the Equateur province, a very destabilizing situation in this fragile area.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo desperately needs peace. Visiting the country last month, I was shocked by the deteriorating living conditions of the Congolese population at large. The informal economy, once the backbone of this resilient country, has all but collapsed. Poverty is rampant, almost 150,000 refugees have fled, and there are countless internally displaced people. In Algiers, I met President Kabila and asked him to take the initiative in granting humanitarian agencies access to all those in need. I was encouraged by his positive reply. Humanitarian assistance is needed to bring relief to hundreds of thousands of suffering people, but it can also contribute to the peace process and be a first step towards a much needed stabilization of the country and of the subregion. I therefore wish to renew my appeal to all parties to the conflict to allow the delivery of aid to refugees, displaced people and all civilians in need.

The situation in the entire Central African subregion has shifted from one of massive refugee movements to one of multiple, interrelated conflicts and smaller human displacement crises. However, the potential for larger and more dramatic displacement exists. Refugees are often manipulated by States and rebel groups alike. At the present juncture, it is very difficult to pursue a comprehensive effort to enforce refugee protection principles with due consideration for the security concerns of States, as we had promoted at the Kampala regional meeting on refugee issues in May 1998. While the Lusaka peace process continues, UNHCR will therefore concentrate on trying to address, if not resolve, individual situations of displacement.

The most pressing issue is to tackle the problem of Rwandans who have not yet returned after fleeing the country in the aftermath of genocide, and particularly of the largest groups, which are in the two Congos. A solution to this problem has been made easier by improvements in the security and internal stability of Rwanda. On the other hand, the presence of armed elements among bona fide refugees continues to be a serious problem in several countries, with security implications affecting and slowing down the peace process. In this respect I am pleased to report that during my recent trip to the subregion I took two key decisions. First, from offices in Bukavu and Goma, UNHCR will resume support for the repatriation of Rwandans still in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We have received assurances from rebel authorities controlling these areas that we shall be granted access to those requesting repatriation, and that the voluntary character of return will be respected. I informed President Bizimungu of Rwanda, who encourages and supports our role in this operation. I also informed President Kabila, who did not object to UNHCR's involvement. Secondly, we shall offer Rwandans in the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) the possibility either of repatriating or of settling in areas in the north of their host country, where they can receive a one-time assistance package to facilitate local integration. This scheme is now under discussion with the authorities in Brazzaville.

Prospects for a solution to the plight of Burundian refugees in Tanzania, on the other hand, appear less promising. Peace talks in Arusha between the Government of Burundi and its opponents continue. Meanwhile, however, refugee repatriation movements are now limited to a few individuals per day. I am very concerned by this situation, which exposes refugees, and the local population, to a situation of serious tension and insecurity at the border between Burundi and Tanzania; it is a situation that can be resolved only when refugees return home voluntarily. In asking the Council to encourage an early and positive conclusion of the Arusha peace process, I would also like to request that refugee issues be addressed from a humanitarian point of view, in respect of international norms. On our side, we shall continue to support Tanzania in ensuring that refugee camps maintain their civilian character. And we stand ready to resume voluntary repatriation and to support the reintegration of Burundian refugees in their country.

Before concluding on Central Africa, I would like to draw the Council's attention to several other situations of conflict and displacement which currently offer little or no hope for early solutions and where UNHCR must therefore continue to provide care and maintenance support, and emergency assistance in the case of new refugee outflows. I am thinking of the situation in Western Sahara, where UNHCR continues to make

preparations for repatriation in March next year, but where the likelihood of the return of refugees depends entirely on the progress of political negotiations. I am referring as well to the Angolan conflict, which is pushing thousands of people to flee their homes. I visited an Angolan refugee camp in the Bas-Congo province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and observed that no return can be possible under the present circumstances. I am referring also to the war in southern Sudan, one of the oldest and most violent conflicts in the world, the effects of which, in terms both of refugee movements and of general insecurity, are widely felt in the region.

And finally, I would particularly like to draw the attention of the Security Council to the violent, and almost forgotten, civil war in the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville). Thousands of inhabitants of Brazzaville and of neighbouring areas, caught in the fighting between government and rebel forces, have been compelled to flee in the past few months, and have been able to return home only by transiting through the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Among them there are thousands of victims of frightening acts of violence, including torture and rape. In the last few days, 30,000 new refugees have arrived in Gabon. This is a new, worrying development that indicates how destabilizing this war may become for the entire region, especially given its proximity to other conflicts. UNHCR has already dispatched an emergency team to Libreville and stands ready to provide support to the authorities to protect and assist refugees. I fully realize the burden that these refugees place on the country's resources, but wish to appeal here to the Government of Gabon to provide asylum to those fleeing the war. It is very urgent, however, that the international community take a much stronger stance with respect to the Congolese conflict and do all that is in its power to put an end to the senseless violence of which thousands of civilians are the victims.

One striking feature of all these conflicts is that they are closely interlinked. The Lusaka peace process addresses only one of them, but the central position of the Democratic Republic of the Congo makes the process crucial to peace in the entire subregion. Furthermore, the presence of armed elements, some of them closely related to refugee groups, and the uncontrolled flow of heavy and light weapons are both causes and effects of the intertwined wars affecting Central Africa. Once more, I would like to urge the Security Council to examine these issues and to take concrete action to address them.

In both Central and West Africa, UNHCR continues its work. Let me, however, repeat once more my key message of today. If refugee problems in these two subregions are to be resolved in a durable fashion, it is essential that support be provided to the political agreements. I would like to draw the Council's attention in particular to the importance of the actual implementation of the security provisions of these agreements, as rapidly as possible and in the most appropriate form, be it through the direct deployment of peacekeepers or observers, or through the provision of logistical support to forces deployed by other countries. African leaders have taken political initiatives to address these conflicts. Throughout my recent travels In Africa, I sensed that there is now a strong expectation for the United Nations to provide more support and to be more actively involved in keeping and building peace. Lusaka and Lomé are windows of opportunity. They may not remain open for long. Let us seize these opportunities now.

We at UNHCR deal every day in the field with millions of men, women and children who flee from war. We understand very well the importance of stopping conflicts, which is what the Lomé and Lusaka peace negotiations aim to do. But we also help refugees return home after conflicts have ended, often to situations of very fragile peace, often to communities that war has left divided and torn. We therefore constantly insist on the importance of consolidating peace after peace has been signed, and of avoiding a dangerous gap between the provision of humanitarian assistance and that of longer-term development cooperation.

I have repeated this point so many times that I risk sounding like a broken record. However — and again, I wish to refer to my recent trips to Africa — such situations of gap continue to exist. Take the example of Rwanda. Most refugees have returned: returnees make up about 25 per cent of the entire population. The phase of humanitarian assistance — relatively well supported by donors — has been followed by much more timid inputs by development agencies and bilateral actors. Resources are simply not forthcoming substantially enough for peace to be consolidated. This is dangerous and, in my opinion, potentially very destabilizing. In the Great Lakes region, as in most parts of Africa, there is a close link between poverty, conflict and the forced displacement of people.

I was proud to visit areas in which UNHCR has done substantial work to support the reintegration of 2 million returnees, including the construction or rehabilitation of 100,000 houses and of communal facilities. This is a remarkable result, I believe, but a

humanitarian agency cannot go beyond this type of work on such a scale. Who will sustain these accomplishments? Who will provide support to the people and the Government?

I agree with those who say that much remains to be done in terms of democratization, power-sharing and reconciliation in Rwanda. Efforts, however, are being made. I was encouraged by a much greater emphasis on reconciliation, for example, in addition to the focus on justice. Attempts to bring people together are now systematic, widespread and very professional. Such efforts must be supported. I am concerned that in these and other situations so — for example, Liberia, which I mentioned earlier — the fragility of Governments and their weak implementation capacity discourage the provision of development resources. While I fully understand that humanitarian assistance is much freer from political constraints than development cooperation — and it should be so — I would nevertheless urge Governments not to forget people when planning and implementing longer-term aid programmes. Often, by giving people a chance, whatever the political and economic context, we can start processes leading to the democratization of institutions and ultimately to the peace and stability of countries and regions.

I do not want to conclude this briefing without at least a few words on the situation in Kosovo, which continues to be a major challenge for my Office and for the international community. When I last briefed the Council, ethnic Albanian refugees were still pouring out of the province. Since the end of hostilities and the deployment of international forces in Kosovo, about 730,000 people have returned home, including some from countries as far as Western Europe and the United States, in one of the most spectacular reverse population movements in contemporary history. Let me add that I consider this repatriation — which, in the overwhelming majority of cases, was organized by refugees themselves — a very, very welcome development and a success achieved by the international community. To be reconstructed, Kosovo needs its own people. The faster they return, the easier it will be to rebuild the province.

There are, however, elements of serious concern. The return of ethnic Albanians has, most unfortunately, coincided with the expulsion, harassment and, in some cases, the killing of people of non-Albanian ethnicity, particularly Serbs and Romas. The massacre of 14 Serbs last week was the latest, and most worrying, such episode. A large part of the Serbian population has already fled Kosovo, and about 170,000 Serbs from the province are displaced in other parts of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, both in Serbia and Montenegro. The international community, which has rightly provided support to the cause of persecuted and expelled Albanians, cannot and must not tolerate that the end of one refugee crisis overlaps with the beginning of another. Much as feelings can be understood, retaliation and revenge must not be allowed to prevail. There is a need to promote reconciliation programmes, systematically and professionally, through media, education and social work. But there is an even more pressing need to rebuild the law enforcement capacity by completing the deployment of KFOR, deploying international police forces in sufficient numbers, training local police forces, restoring the judicial system, and so on.

Another area of concern is reconstruction. People are rebuilding their homes, and humanitarian agencies, under UNHCR's lead responsibility, are giving them help. I am concerned, however, that if a more systematic reconstruction programme does not begin in the next few weeks, the larger rehabilitation work — electricity, water, roads, commercial areas — will not make any significant progress before winter. The limited resources of humanitarian agencies will allow people to rebuild part of their houses, but this will not be sufficient in the harsh Balkan winter. Let me add also that reconstruction in Kosovo cannot be delinked from efforts to support and revitalize the economy in South-Eastern Europe as a whole, and especially in countries that have been affected by large movements of refugees. I hope that the upcoming meetings in Brussels and Sarajevo will translate the commitment of Governments into concrete action.

I would like to conclude by referring to a problem that has received much attention in the last few months. I am aware that there is a perception of disparity in the assistance given, for example, to displaced persons from Kosovo, as opposed to that given to African refugees. I know that many here have also been concerned by this complex and difficult problem.

Emergencies, of course, attract more attention than other programmes, and the Kosovo crisis has been a very serious and very large refugee emergency. Crises in Africa at certain times have also received heightened attention and financial support. Think of the Horn in the 1980s, or the Great Lakes region a few years ago. It is true, however, that Kosovo has been the focus of unprecedented political attention and material support by the international community, and by Western countries in

particular. Undeniably, proximity, strategic interest and extraordinary media focus have played a key role in determining the quality and level of response. Just as undeniably, this has not been true — and continues not to be true — in other situations, including some of those of which I have spoken today.

But let me go back to the point I made at the beginning. The positive indications of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit in Algiers may signal — will signal, I hope — a renewed commitment by African Governments to take their future, and the future of their people, more resolutely into their own hands and to address and resolve their problems, including refugee problems, through negotiations rather than force. This is a fundamental precondition for international support. On the other hand, we who shoulder global and not just regional responsibilities should do all that is in our power to back efforts to resolve conflicts, in Africa and in other parts of the world. And while I can only appeal to the Council, and to Governments, to be as balanced as possible in supporting peace endeavours, I can certainly affirm that my Office will continue to fulfil its own responsibilities towards all those compelled to flee their homes, and especially those who do so away from the limelight of international attention.

The President: I thank Mrs. Ogata for her comprehensive briefing, which has been most enlightening to the Council.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): Let me at the outset express my delegation's profound condolences to the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Morocco on the passing of King Hassan II. Our thoughts are with them at this difficult time.

Over 1.7 million people in Angola are internally displaced, while hundreds are refugees in neighbouring countries. Some 450,000 Sierra Leoneans are refugees, and over 200,000 are internally displaced. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has over 700,000 internally displaced persons and 300,000 refugees. These are but a few examples. The number of refugees and internally displaced persons in those three African countries alone far exceeds the total of refugees and internally displaced persons outside Africa. Yet the level of financial and material assistance rendered to refugees and internally displaced persons in other regions is far higher than what is available for Africa.

It is in this context that my delegation wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for arranging this briefing at this crucial time for African refugees. I also wish to thank the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Ogata, for the informative briefing. Indeed, the information she has given us is saddening, but the world needs to be constantly reminded.

It is disheartening to know that hundreds of thousands of civilians in Africa are forced to flee their homes and become refugees or internally displaced persons, living under the most degrading and unbearable conditions. The High Commissioner has clearly explained the fate of African refugees. The situation is worst for women, children and the elderly. Lack of food, clean water, medicine, shelter and blankets is a problem confronting these people. In fact, we know this all too well, because it was not too long ago that many of us Namibians were refugees ourselves. This is no doubt one of the most horrendous experiences.

Refugees and internally displaced persons are a direct result of ongoing conflicts. Conflicts on the African continent are both internally and externally motivated. These conflicts, as has been proven, have the capacity to destabilize a whole region. The ideal situation would be to have a world without conflict. It is important, therefore to address the root causes of conflict on the African continent if we are to prevent recurrence and to minimize the negative impact of these conflicts on civilians. The flow of arms and particularly the proliferation of small arms to conflict areas are no doubt major contributing factors to conflicts in Africa today. Some of these arms continue to flow despite arms embargoes imposed by the Security Council. We therefore call on arms producers to abide by Council resolutions and to exercise restraint when shipping arms to our troubled continent.

Through regional efforts such as those of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community such conflicts could be contained. But regional organizations have limitations and require financial and logistical support in order to be successful. We therefore commend those countries that have rendered support to the ECOWAS Monitoring Group in its efforts to contribute to peace in Africa.

Let me stress that we are encouraged by the signing of ceasefire agreements on the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone, as well as by the acceptance by Ethiopia and Eritrea of the modalities for the implementation of the Organization of African Unity Framework Agreement. We hope that these developments mark the beginning of a process that will allow refugees and internally displaced persons to return to their homes in peace. We are aware that this presents a challenging task to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and to the rest of the humanitarian relief community, but we are confident that with the vigour and determination that have prevailed in dealing with so many conflicts, and with the support of the international community, the agencies will live up to the challenges ahead. We welcome the decision by Mrs. Ogata to resume the repatriation of Rwandan refugees now in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Congo (Brazzaville).

We cannot overemphasize the need for the warring parties to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel as well as that of refugees and internally displaced persons. We would therefore once again call upon all parties to ensure the security and safety of all humanitarian personnel. By the same token, we call on the parties to allow access for the provision of humanitarian assistance to the needy.

On their own, UNHCR and its partner agencies cannot succeed in addressing the needs of African refugees. Recent events have shown that, with the necessary political will, the international community can help bring about an end to most of these conflicts. It is, however, unfortunate that selectivity is applied in exercising that will and in providing financial support. Images of African refugees are not shown on our television screens, but the plight of these people is very real. For example, out of the $1.6 million requested through the appeal for Angola, only 14 per cent has been provided, and out of $27.9 million requested for Sierra Leone, only 26 per cent has reached the agencies.

We wish to emphasize strongly that it is imperative that the international community support post-conflict peace-building activities by assisting countries in their reconciliation and economic reconstruction, which will ensure long-term security. It is one thing to end a conflict, and it is another to ensure that the conflict does not recur. It is an enormous task, yet, if peace is to prevail, all our efforts are required.

The relevant United Nations agencies can only coordinate the assistance rendered. It is for the international community to make available the requested assistance.

Finally, I wish to commend the efforts of Mrs. Ogata and the personnel of UNHCR and of the other humanitarian agencies that work tirelessly under strenuous and often dangerous conditions to bring relief to the civilians in need.

Mr. Dangue Réwaka (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Before I begin my statement on the issue before us today, I would like to extend to the royal family, the Government and the people of Morocco our sincere and profound condolences over the sudden death of King Hassan II. We will forever remember his great work to bring peoples together and to seek peace among nations.

The issue which brings us together today has been considered within the context of the report of the Secretary-General submitted to the Security Council in April 1998 (S/1998/318). At that time we discussed at some length and adopted measures that I shall speak about later.

I would like to thank Mrs. Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, for the important statement she has just made to the Council on the situation of refugees in Africa. She greatly stressed the underlying causes of the mass exodus of refugees to African countries where there is some stability.

I will not go over those causes again; I just want to draw attention to the role that the Security Council must play to help countries in conflict to return to the peace that is so essential. Without peace, no lasting economic and social progress can be achieved.

In 1998, after considering the report of the Secretary-General, we adopted resolution 1208 (1998) of 19 November. The operative part of that resolution requests the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Secretariat to take certain actions to alleviate the suffering of refugees in the African countries. The measures adopted included personnel training to cope with the large numbers of refugees in Africa.

Just a few moments ago, Mrs. Ogata, describing the situation of refugees in Central Africa, spoke of refugees from countries neighbouring Gabon, refugees that we

took in. I should like to reaffirm to her now that we are ready, with the hospitality which has always distinguished the Gabonese people, to continue to cooperate with her and with the UNHCR staff with a view to ensuring the best possible conditions for the refugees in our country pending their return to their countries of origin. Mrs. Ogata will soon be receiving at her office a request, within the context of the resolution I mentioned earlier, for assistance to the Gabonese staff and national Gabonese organizations responsible for receiving the refugees to help them with the arrival and handling of refugees coming from neighbouring countries.

We have some problems in Gabon. It has not been easy to take in the refugees because some have been armed. There was also the problem of how to settle them with the local population. Sometimes this led to trouble, but we were able to control the situation. However, we would appreciate receiving proper training, particularly of the security forces.

With respect to funding, we have General Assembly resolution 52/103, adopted 12 December 1997, which calls on the international community to establish funds for UNHCR because most often funds are unavailable at UNHCR. I would like to ask the High Commissioner what the situation is regarding pledges and what funds have actually been received to help African refugees.

We have become party to all of the conventions relating to refugees and have signed the Organization of African Unity convention on refugee problems. We recognize that we must grant access to the staff of all humanitarian organizations besides UNHCR to the refugees so that they can give the assistance needed. We would like to reaffirm here that we will do this and will continue to work in cooperation with UNHCR.

We also have the problem of refugees linked to conflict resolution. That is the case with the conflicts in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On both fronts there has been significant progress. It is important that the Security Council not delay any further in taking the initiatives incumbent on it so that the absence of a group to monitor the ceasefire observance and the implementation of the agreements signed by the parties will not be used as a pretext by some people who might violate the agreements. This applies also to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Therefore, we urge the Security Council to work on this so that it can accept without reservations the proposals made by the Secretary-General with regard to the two countries.

As we know through the media, recently there have been clashes on the borders in eastern Africa. These involve organizational problems of receiving the refugees. Here I am referring to what happened not so long ago between Burundi and Tanzania. It is important that countries that are taking in refugees be given sufficient resources so that situations such as those that occurred in Rwanda and Burundi in 1994 will not recur. Here again, UNHCR has the responsibility, and the necessary resources must be given to the countries so that they can deal with this mass movement of refugees. It is my delegation's hope that follow-up to and implementation of Security Council resolution 1208 (1998) can be assured.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Allow me first of all, on behalf of the Chinese Government and people, to express our most profound condolences on the passing away of King Hassan II of Morocco. We also wish to express our sincere sympathy to his Majesty, Mohammed VI, the royal family of Morocco and the Moroccan Government and people.

The Chinese delegation wishes to thank Mrs. Sadako Ogata for her briefing to the Security Council on the question of African refugees. We also wish to express our appreciation to you, Mr. President, and to the Malaysian delegation for the efforts made to arrange this open debate.

The African continent currently has over 3 million refugees and over 2 million displaced persons, amounting to almost one third of the world population in these categories. Due to conflict and economic backwardness, too many African refugees find themselves in a lamentable predicament, eliciting the general concern of the international community.

It is gratifying to note that, in recent decades, the international community has made untiring efforts to assist African refugees. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the relevant agencies, donor countries and some international organizations and agencies of civil society have provided a certain amount of humanitarian assistance to African refugees. This assistance has, to a certain extent, eased their plight and we appreciate it.

The key to the resolution of the refugee problem is to remove the root causes of this phenomenon. This has become a widespread and shared understanding of the international community. When we discuss the question

of African refugees, we must consider the underlying causes of this issue. In recent years, the general trend on the African continent has been towards alleviating the problem, but low-intensity conflicts and turbulence continue unabated. The relatively backward economies, buffeted by the waves of globalization, also face marginalization. Political instability and lack of economic development are the basic forces behind the lack of long-term solutions to and the growing intensity of the African problem.

Many African countries clearly recognize this fact. African leaders, at the recent thirty-fifth summit of the Organization of African Unity, issued a strong call for an end to conflict and for the revitalization of African economies, and demonstrated firm resolve to take action. This was a positive development for the resolution of the question of African refugees. At the same time, we feel that the international community should — on the basis of the principles of respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs — increase assistance to African countries and participate in the resolution of the refugee problem.

In recent days, great attention has been paid to the fact that, while every refugee in Kosovo receives $1.6 every day, every African refugee receives a mere ¢11. As Mrs. Ogata pointed out in her briefing a few moments ago, in certain emergency situations one must concentrate the resources necessary to meet the needs of a given situation. However, this sharp disparity clearly demonstrates that certain donor countries provide foreign assistance selectively and conditionally in accordance with their own political interests and wishes. This is extremely unfair to African refugees. We strongly appeal to the international community to abide by the principles of humanitarianism, neutrality and fairness in providing assistance and to avoid politicizing the provision of assistance and promoting imbalance among the regions.

In April 1998, we held a comprehensive discussion in this Chamber on the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Africa, including refugees. In November 1998, the Security Council adopted resolution 1208 (1998) on the question of African refugees, proving that the Council is capable of demonstrating its particular concern for the refugee problem. We also feel that the Council — which bears the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security — should be actively engaged in the resolution of conflict and strife in Africa and maintain stability and peace there. Only thus can the problem of African refugees be resolved at its source. Only thus can the Security Council make an outstanding contribution to the resolution of the problem of African refugees.

At the same time, we also note that many developing countries are frequently beset by natural disasters. The resources for disaster relief, however, are increasingly scarce. That should be a source of concern, because this situation can also affect the stability of disaster-stricken countries.

As a developing country, China has, within its means and through multilateral and bilateral channels, provided assistance to African countries at various levels and in various forms. China enjoys a good cooperative relationship with UNHCR, which we wish to maintain and strengthen in order to make our contribution to the solution of the African refugee problem.

The President: I thank the representative of China for his kind words addressed to me and my delegation.

Mr. Dejammet (France) (*spoke in French*): First, I thank you, Sir, for having invited the Security Council to join in the mourning and sorrow of the royal family of Morocco for the passing of His Majesty Hassan II. We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for having represented the United Nations through his presence at His Majesty's funeral. The King of Morocco embodied a vision and a policy of peace, openness and tolerance. He was respected and loved by his people. France was honoured to be among his friends.

In her statement to the Council at its meeting in May on the situation in Kosovo, the High Commissioner for Refugees concluded with an appeal to the members of the Council. Mrs. Ogata invited us to ensure that the entirely necessary and justified emergency mobilization on behalf of the Kosovar refugees not lead to neglect of the other hotbeds of crisis throughout the world, first and foremost in Africa. The High Commissioner's recent visit to Africa and presence here with us today are reminders of that appeal. Indeed, there have been many indications of the high priority attached to the situation of refugees in that part of the world, not only by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), but by the entire United Nations.

Our debate here in the Security Council — for which initiative we thank you, Sir — should also be an opportunity for us to confirm and strengthen the international community's commitment. We are responsible for doing everything possible to ensure that

Africa not feel that, once again, it is the victim of imbalanced policies, of which the Ambassador of China cited examples.

As the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees just reminded us, the situation of refugees in Africa is of great concern. The figures speak for themselves: of the world's approximately 22 million refugees, more than one third are located in Africa. In the Great Lakes region alone there are 6 million refugees and displaced persons. Given the magnitude of the task, all our energy must be mobilized and every solution explored.

In his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace in Africa (S/1998/318), the Secretary-General dealt with the question of refugees in the more general context of humanitarian assistance. A number of priorities are urgent, and they were identified at that time. First, there is the issue of the protection of civilians in areas of hostility. As the fighting continues to rage, we might ask ourselves whether this objective has been attained. There is also the issue of the creation of zones of peace for children. Once again, despite the efforts of Olara Otunnu, we are very far from having truly succeeded in implementing this basic requirement.

With regard to the negotiation of provisional ceasefires to provide foodstuffs and emergency assistance, I believe that some real progress has been made in the field. We know that ensuring the security and protection of refugee populations, particularly by separating them from armed elements, is a fundamental problem, and some have found it to be the source of the continued fighting in the Great Lakes region. Finally, there is the issue of assistance to host countries, which are frequently destabilized by the massive influx of refugees. The representative of Gabon earlier told us how his country has had to cope with the problems created by receiving refugees. We should also consider the situation of a poor African country such as Guinea, which was obliged to receive a very large number of refugees.

The implementation of all of these measures thus has a cost, as does the day-to-day management of emergency situations, a problem which the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees must continually confront. In this context, we can only welcome the money-saving measures already taken by UNHCR as well as its efforts to bring about budgetary and administrative restructuring. With regard to Africa in particular, we welcome the reforms that are being carried out within UNHCR to create a new, single structure for the entire continent. The introduction of results-based human resource management methods should also be emphasized to show that UNHCR is doing its part, spontaneously, under Mrs. Ogata's authority, in order to attain, to the extent possible, the objectives that have been set.

The financial situation of UNHCR's African programmes, of course, remains worrying. Only the programmes for Angola have more than 50 per cent financing. For Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone, funding is at about 25 per cent. For the Democratic Republic of the Congo it is less than 25 per cent, and for the Republic of the Congo it is less than 10 per cent. Those statistics relate to what refugees or displaced persons receive in Africa as compared with Europe. That should prompt us, the Members of the United Nations, to assume our responsibilities.

Of course, as the Secretary-General has reminded us, a great deal depends on the Africans themselves. The question of refugees cannot be resolved without conclusively resolving the problems being experienced in Africa: underdevelopment, an increase in conflicts and the difficult transition to democracy and good governance. But again, on all these points, we — and the Security Council in particular — can and must act. We must help the African States in their transition to good governance and democracy and, in particular, in settling regional conflicts. We must also provide material and financial assistance to UNHCR. For its part, despite the bilateral obligations that it is striving to fulfil with all developing countries, my country has sought in recent years to maintain the level of its contributions.

We have already heard Mrs. Ogata tell us that there are some signs of hope following recent events and the agreements that have been reached. But I should like to invite her to give some thought to several issues. The first relates to Guinea, which is the primary host country in Africa. It has almost 500,000 refugees on its territory, most of them from Sierra Leone and Liberia. Guinea, which is a poor country, is in no position to respond alone to this major challenge. Last June's progress report from the Office of the High Commissioner revealed the inadequacy of funding for UNHCR's programme. I am not certain that the trust fund that we asked to be set up has been properly provided for. My question, therefore, is whether Mrs. Ogata has been able recently to detect progress in the financial replenishment of the programme, which is essential for Guinea.

In Sierra Leone, what prospects for the return of refugees have been opened up by the new agreements? Has UNHCR already prepared a repatriation plan? Outside Freetown, where it has recently re-established itself, UNHCR has recently observed a significant population of displaced persons who are not receiving any assistance whatsoever. What is the situation today, given that the parties signed a peace plan last month in Lomé, and what is the distribution of tasks between UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross? As for Angola, we would of course appreciate anything that Mrs. Ogata can tell us about what seems to have been a serious deterioration in the situation.

Lastly, with regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the first reports from the Office of the High Commissioner mention a large number of refugees moving towards Tanzania, and some of the accounts of the refugees unfortunately leave us in no doubt about the cruelty of the fighting and its tragic consequences for the civilian population. We are aware of the signs of hope and the improvement in the situation, about which Mrs. Ogata has informed us, particularly with regard to the possibility of the return of refugees. But any additional information about what is happening, in particular with regard to the flows of refugees to Tanzania, would enable us better to direct our assistance and gain an awareness of the urgent needs to be met.

The President: I thank the representative of France for the kind words he addressed to my delegation.

Mr. Buallay (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): With a great feeling of sorrow and sadness, my delegation extends its condolences on the passing of His Majesty Hassan II of the sister Kingdom of Morocco, who passed away in the afternoon on Friday, 23 July. At the time of this great tragedy, we extend condolences to the people and Government of the Kingdom of Morocco and to the noble Alawis royal family, asking God Almighty to make paradise his abode together with the saints and good people. With his passing, Morocco has lost a first-class statesman, who spent the greater part of his life in the service of his people and in the service of Arab and Islamic nations. His passing is a great loss for the Arab nation, which this year lost three of its great leaders: His Highness Sheikh 'Isa ibn Salman Al Khalifa, Emir of Bahrain; His Majesty King Hussein ibn Talal of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and His Majesty King Hassan II of the Kingdom of Morocco.

King Hassan II during his lifetime expended tireless efforts to preserve the unity, prosperity and progress of Morocco. He also played a major role in the service of Arab and Islamic causes, and among his prominent efforts is his part in the Jerusalem Commission. We cannot but ask God for forgiveness and mercy for the dear departed and ask success for His Majesty King Mohamed VI, confident that he will continue the great march begun by his late father in building the modern Morocco. We also wish progress and prosperity to the people of Morocco under its new sovereign, who is the best successor to his illustrious father.

Mr. President, we appreciate your convening of this important plenary meeting in conformity with the wish of my delegation and those like-minded delegations in opening up the work of the Council before the Member States who are not members of the Council and to the outside world in general. We thank Mrs. Ogata and all the staff of the humanitarian organizations for their noble efforts. My delegation regrets the continued military conflicts in some countries on the African continent, which increase the numbers of refugees day in and day out. At this plenary meeting we would like to raise several questions of importance, in our view, relevant to the refugees.

First, as regards the need to open safe corridors in the States in conflict, we believe opening such safe corridors is essential for the delivery of assistance to refugees. The States should guarantee the opening of these safe corridors, without which the assistance cannot be delivered to the needy refugees.

Second, we believe that the necessary technical assistance should be provided to staff affiliated with the humanitarian organizations, in order to enable them also to deliver assistance to those refugees in need.

Yet, and this is my third point, we want to emphasize the need for all humanitarian organizations to comply with international law and the local laws of those States where they work and of the States through which they work. Organizations must also respect the sovereignty and international legitimacy of these States and not violate domestic calculations, respecting the need to cooperate fully with the local authorities of these States.

Fourth, we urge the international community and the donor States to increase the humanitarian assistance provided to the States experiencing conflicts, which have

refugees and displaced persons, and to those States receiving refugees in order to mitigate the burdens shouldered by those States. The example was given of the burden born by Mali in this regard. We also urge the international community and the donor States to provide technical and material assistance to the African States and States in conflict in order to assist them with economic and social development, which are main components of establishing stability and safety in States in conflict, for averting the recurrence of such conflicts there and, hence, for preventing an increase in the number of refugees.

My delegation would like to pose a question in this regard to Mrs. Ogata concerning the view of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on a solution to the plight of, on the one hand, those refugees who have been massed against their will in camps within these theatres of conflict, where they are perhaps forced to participate in the conflict, and, on the other hand, those refugees participating willingly in the conflict as a means of earning a living, however fraught with risks. Thus, we have two kinds of refugees living under unenviable circumstances. Their fate may not be within jurisdiction of UNHCR in the strict sense, but they are, in the first place, refugees.

It is of concern to us that there is news of increasing numbers of refugees participating in a number of conflicts. We feel that it is high time to consider finding a means of saving those refugees who have been forced into the theatres of conflict, first in the interest of those refugees, and second, to prevent their participation in conflict, willingly or unwillingly.

The President: I thank the representative of Bahrain for the kind words he addressed to my delegation.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil): I would like first of all to express the condolences of the Brazilian delegation at the passing away of King Hassan II of Morocco. My delegation would also like to say a word of admiration for his achievements as a great statesman and as a beloved leader of his people.

I wish to extend a warm welcome to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Mrs. Sadako Ogata, and to congratulate you, Mr. President, for having convened this public meeting. It is indeed a very useful exchange of ideas that we are carrying out today.

Let my first words be to commend Mrs. Ogata's work as High Commissioner. Her work is being performed with such dedication and professional skill that it deserves the admiration of all of us. This is the kind of job in the United Nations that deserves, intrinsically, the support and the respect of all Member States, for the assistance to refugees deals with coping with the suffering of human beings who have lost all their daily points of reference, sometimes becoming even indifferent to life, as someone remarked after visiting a refugee camp in Angola.

As was clear from what we heard in Mrs. Ogata's presentation, the refugee problem in Africa is a dramatic question. The situations described involve many different countries and a large number of displaced persons. There are signs of hope, but these are still few. Unfortunately, the complexity of war and the fragility of peace in Africa -- as Mrs. Ogata stated last November — continue to lead to new flows of refugees.

Brazil echoes the appeal made by Mrs. Ogata last May, when she briefed the Council on the plight of refugees in the Balkans. On that occasion, she reminded the Security Council not to overlook other refugee crises around the world. As a developing country whose population and culture have deep roots in Africa, Brazil is sympathetic to the calls for the international community, represented in this Organization better than anywhere else, to show for the African crisis the same level of interest and political involvement displayed in other parts of the globe.

As a member of the Security Council, we are very concerned at the impact of refugee flows on the stability of Africa, as well as at the infiltration of armed elements into the refugee settlements.

The work of UNHCR is of paramount importance in both contexts. Difficult as they may be to achieve, the main goals remain the same: the return and reintegration of refugees, the promotion of tolerance among different ethnic and religious groups, and support for confidence-building measures.

Because of the magnitude of the African refugee problem, which I have already touched on, the tasks faced by Mrs. Ogata probably go beyond the means and the possibilities of UNHCR alone. Building a culture of peace in order to tackle these problems in the long run may require sharing complex responsibilities with different institutions.

The Council has the fundamental goal of creating conditions for peace to prevail, and there can be no peace without strong foundations. In this connection, I would like to pose only one question to Mrs. Ogata.

Mrs. Ogata, there has been a visible increase in the demand for humanitarian services, especially from your Office. That increase has taken place not only because of the reality on the ground and the difficulty involved in tackling one of the roots of the problem, which is poverty, but also because the level of awareness of public opinion nowadays is higher than before. I would like you to comment on the other side of this question. What can you tell us about the supply of humanitarian services in Africa, especially with respect to donors' responses to these new challenges? More specifically, what do you think the Council could do, in concrete terms, to help you resolve this problem — which is real and which you presented so clearly — of the supply of humanitarian services in Africa?

Furthermore, in regard to the question of coordinating efforts to resolve the refugee problem, what is your assessment of the coordination between your organization and the Organization of African Unity in the area of humanitarian and refugee matters?

The President: I thank the representative of Brazil for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Türk (Slovenia): I wish at the outset to express my delegation's sincere condolences to the Government and the people of Morocco on the passing of King Hassan II. King Hassan II will be remembered as a great leader and statesman and as a man of peace.

We wish to thank you, Mr. President, for arranging today's briefing by Mrs. Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and we are grateful to her for her briefing and for the wise words with which she advanced some of the fundamental problems of refugees in Africa and elsewhere.

The basic advantage of this briefing is that today Mrs. Ogata has updated the Council on a number of basic issues that are of priority importance in the Council's work. We are increasingly aware of the extent of the problem of refugees in Angola, the Great Lakes region and western Africa, including Sierra Leone, Guinea and other countries, as well as of the plight of refugees in the Sudan and elsewhere. We appreciate the analysis provided by Mrs. Ogata concerning the causes of the refugee flows and especially her emphasis on the combination of armed conflicts and poverty that characterizes the situations which result in refugee flows in Africa. It is that combination of those two factors that creates the most dangerous and tragic situations, and it would be probably be wise for the United Nations to attempt to address these two questions together.

Of course, the Security Council's priority remains in the area of diplomatic action and of more narrowly defined security issues. There is also a need to increase development assistance and use the instruments of development in order to prevent conflicts which result in large refugee flows.

Mrs. Ogata informed us about the growing pressure of internally displaced persons and refugees in several areas of Africa, including Angola and Central Africa. In this context I wish to focus for a moment on the situation in Tanzania, which is hosting refugees from Burundi and, more recently, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We have noted Mrs. Ogata's analysis today of the problem of Burundian refugees in Tanzania and of the growing tensions on the border between Burundi and Tanzania. They are characterized by slow repatriation and progress in the Arusha peace process, which we understand still leaves something to be desired.

We understood the appeal made by Mrs. Ogata to the Security Council to encourage an early and positive conclusion of the Arusha process, and I believe that in the coming period the Council should devote adequate attention to this question as a political question.

On the other hand, I should like to address a question to the High Commissioner on Refugees: has the current situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the new influx of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Tanzania added to the difficulties she described in her briefing, and, more specifically, how is the implementation of last year's Kampala decisions progressing, and is it relevant to the evolving situation of refugees in that area?

I raise these questions because over the last month the Council has been duly preoccupied with the most acute crises which have characterized the situations in Africa, and perhaps the kind of issues referred to today by Mrs. Ogata were not focused on sufficiently. Perhaps today we could shed some additional light on that issue.

The High Commissioner on Refugees has also explained to us the importance of the implementation of

recently signed peace agreements, especially of the Lomé agreement on the situation in Sierra Leone. We agree with the questions that were posed in that regard earlier on by Ambassador Dejammet and with the points made in this connection by Ambassador Réwaka, who were among the first speakers this morning. I believe that the answers that Mrs. Ogata will give will be important to the Security Council, but above all I think that her recommendation is essential, namely on the need to support the process of implementation of the peace agreement, which, I believe, contains the basic answer to a variety of questions that have been raised and which, of course, can also be answered in more specific terms.

Finally, we appreciate that Mrs. Ogata has addressed a number of general issues pertaining to the role and the responsibility of the Security Council under the Charter. Many of these are continuously considered by the Security Council, not only in the context of country-specific situations, but also as thematic issues. Let me briefly refer to them.

The need, first, to strengthen the efforts to put an end to military conflicts defines the basic function of the Security Council. By fulfilling that responsibility the Council can most effectively contribute to the solution of refugee situations. Secondly, the need to focus on the situation of children during periods of displacement and during their rehabilitation after the conflict is a priority to which the Council is giving increasing importance in its work. We think that this is the correct approach. Thirdly, the need to curb the arms flow is a matter that has been addressed by the Security Council in a number of resolutions and presidential statements, and there is much to be done in the future. Again, Ambassador Réwaka has spoken on this subject.

In this connection, I would like to add that we understand that we cannot expect quick fixes for the arms-flow problems that are destabilizing broad regions of Africa. But there is a need for steady efforts on the part of the international community, including the Security Council. In that regard we welcome the idea of the Security Council some time in the near future holding a thematic debate on the flow of small arms and light weapons.

The consolidation of peace after a conflict is another theme that the Council has been considering almost continuously. And today the High Commissioner for Refugees has been very persuasive in explaining the need appropriately to combine efforts to ensure security in post-conflict situations and efforts to foster development. I hope that these points will be duly taken into account when the Security Council discusses in more detail the situation in Sierra Leone and other similar situations.

Finally, the High Commissioner referred to questions of political normalization after armed conflicts. She spoke about the need to foster in societies both reconciliation and justice. I think that both of these values are important and basic to normalization. I would like to add that, without the requisite degree of justice, reconciliation in a society is difficult. Therefore a proper combination of both would, in our opinion at least, require a very basic understanding of the importance of justice, which needs to be ensured in post-conflict situations.

The President: I thank the representative of Slovenia for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Jagne (Gambia): Our meeting today is taking place when the continent of Africa and the Arab world are mourning the sad and irretrievable loss of an illustrious son, a statesman of exceptional stature, a great and generous leader, a freedom fighter and a peacemaker: King Hassan II of Morocco. We offer our heartfelt condolences to the Government and the people of Morocco. May his soul rest in perfect peace.

My delegation would like to express its gratitude to you, Sir, for organizing this open briefing, the importance of which cannot be overemphasized. We are also honoured to have Mrs. Ogata with us again, and we thank her for her informative and very useful briefing.

Listening to Mrs. Ogata we understand better the magnitude of the problem, particularly in West and Central Africa. With the recent political developments, there appears to be a ray of hope, as embodied in the Lomé and Lusaka peace agreements. In both cases, we all agree that the peace is fragile. This is why it is absolutely necessary to heed the appeal made by Mrs. Ogata this morning for the necessary resources to be provided to shore up those agreements.

The consolidation of the peace process cannot be done in a vacuum. Post-conflict peace-building requires resources, yet at times assistance is hard to come by. Fresh from Algiers, where she attended the Organization of African Unity summit, Mrs. Ogata has eloquently interpreted the new spirit that prevailed in Algiers, as

amply demonstrated by African leaders in their renewed commitment to try to resolve conflicts peacefully.

Nobody should be left in doubt now that African leaders are doing everything in their power to find peaceful solutions to the various conflicts plaguing the continent. We must also recognize that these efforts cannot be sustained unless we have the support of our partners in development. We are, therefore, duty-bound to echo Mrs. Ogata's appeal for assistance to the various peace processes in Africa.

In Central Africa, the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the main focus of attention. Peace is within reach, and therefore we should not relent in our endeavour to obtain a ceasefire agreement signed by all the parties to the conflict. It would have a positive impact throughout the region.

Similarly, in West Africa the Lomé agreement raises our hopes for a lasting peace in war-torn Sierra Leone. Again, our leaders have done their best; it now remains for the rest of the international community to make a major effort to help consolidate what has been achieved so far.

In providing assistance to refugees, let us also not forget the host countries that share their meagre resources, sometimes to such an extent that they create other problems for themselves at home. My own country, the Gambia, has for a long time been hosting refugees from all over our subregion. Although we do not make a lot of noise about it, we do need assistance to cater to all our brethren from neighbouring countries. Many have been integrated into Gambian society, but that does not mean that our problems are over.

Each time we discuss Africa, the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (S/1998/318) comes to mind. Very often, though, we pay less attention to that other aspect of the report: sustainable development. We cannot agree more with Mrs. Ogata that there is a close link among poverty, conflict and forced displacement. Unless and until the question of the eradication of poverty is properly addressed, there will always be conflicts and consequently forced displacements.

The evil must be attacked at its roots. Poverty constitutes one of the main root causes, if not the main root cause of all these problems that we are facing today in Africa. We can only hope that the same attention being given to other parts of the world will be given to Africa as well. Suffering is the same everywhere, and therefore people should be treated equally, irrespective of where they are located, be it in Africa, Asia, Latin America or Europe.

All the same, we are thankful for the amount of assistance provided to Africa. But it is inadequate compared to what others elsewhere are receiving. We need the continued support and understanding of the rest of the international community in the spirit of true partnership and solidarity, especially at this time when African leaders have demonstrated renewed commitment to resolving the problems bedeviling the continent, not by recourse to the barrel of a gun but through negotiations.

The President: I thank the representative of the Gambia for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Fowler (Canada): I join you, Sir, and others who have expressed profound sorrow at the passing of His Majesty King Hassan II of Morocco. His long and courageous leadership of his people and his contribution to the search for peace in his troubled region will long be remembered. The success of that peace process, with which both King Hassan and the late King Hussein of Jordan were so closely associated, would constitute a fitting and lasting memorial to their enlightened vision.

(*spoke in French*)

Allow me to thank the High Commissioner, Mrs. Ogata, for her briefing which, as usual, was both thoughtful and thorough. As Mrs. Ogata quite rightly noted, conflicts and the flows of refugees and displaced peoples fleeing for their lives continue to be very common phenomena in Africa, as, indeed, they have continued to be elsewhere. These conflicts, many of which are civil and guerrilla wars, are very different from those that raged 30 years ago when the Organization of African Unity Refugee Convention was adopted. Often they are more brutal and more intractable than wars between States, with high human costs and destabilizing consequences.

In many African conflicts, the movement of desperate people across borders in short periods of time overwhelms the infrastructure of host countries, leading to serious social problems in States which often already face other domestic challenges. I recall visiting the Bamaco camp in western Tanzania in late May 1994 and being told of the arrival in a single day, 25 April I believe, of 210,000 refugees from Rwanda. Ambassador

Türk has reminded us that Tanzania is always the host country for a large number of refugees from the Great Lakes area, this time from Burundi, and that this situation always threatens broader regional destabilization.

Sometimes, the movement of displaced people constitutes a deliberate tactic of war. In Angola, for example, where some 1.7 million people are displaced out of a population roughly estimated at 11 million, UNITA herds large numbers of civilians from the countryside into cities. The result is the ebb and flow of vast numbers of frightened and desperate people across battle lines and, often, through mine fields laid by both sides.

(*spoke in English*)

Refugee situations have a serious regional dimension which can spread disputes over national borders, drawing more countries into these conflicts. The Council has repeatedly witnessed this phenomenon, including, for example, with regard to the turmoil in Rwanda, the former Zaire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. In Central Africa, the arrival last week of over 5,000 refugees, many armed, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo into the Central African Republic, joining the 11,000 already there, threatens to destabilize the fragile situation in Bangui and throughout the country. Some claim that such a source of instability was not foreseen in the United Nations force's original mandate and thus ought to be of no concern to the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) and should not affect the Secretary-General's recommendations for a modest increase in the size of that force. We do not take this view.

As Mrs. Ogata has pointed out, 30,000 refugees left Congo (Brazzaville) for Gabon just last week. While this too may have been somewhat foreseen, the implications for the spread of the conflict into Gabon remain no less serious. We might usefully ask ourselves whether the international community would still be grappling with interlocking conflicts in Central Africa if we, the Security Council and the States Members of the United Nations, had responded more effectively and more expeditiously to the crisis in eastern Zaire almost three years ago.

The 30-year-old struggle in the Sudan has driven refugees and displaced people from their homes and has led to the establishment of a large presence of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in southern Sudan, in neighbouring Kenya and in Uganda. Warring parties within the Sudan and Uganda raid across the borders with regularity and engage in horrible tactics such as capturing school-age children and incorporating them into armies as child soldiers, sex slaves and, often, as mere cannon fodder.

Such circumstances, like recent experiences in Guinea, demonstrate the need to enhance the security of refugee camps and settlements. Following on the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (S/1998/318), the Council addressed this question last year in its resolution 1208 (1998) which, in unequivocal terms, called on all concerned to respect the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and condemned the use of such camps by combatants for the furtherance of military aims. Given the continued importance of this matter, I would like to ask Mrs. Ogata how the development of her ladder of options regarding refugee camp security is progressing, what reactions she has received from other Governments and how UNHCR is applying the lessons in the field.

Canada continues to be profoundly concerned about the well-being of refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa. We see the twin issues of protection and access as paramount. In many war-torn African countries, humanitarian access to the displaced is frequently obstructed or denied by warring factions, and humanitarian principles are ignored with impunity. This is an especially difficult challenge for those conflicts which involve rebel groups, whose accountability is at best limited. Furthermore, humanitarian workers — both local and expatriate staff — continue to find themselves under serious and chronic threat. As we believe elsewhere, such violations of human security are unacceptable, and creative means must be pursued by the international community and the Governments and the peoples of Africa to redress them.

Canada regards the ministerial workshop organized by UNHCR in conjunction with the Organization of African Unity in Kampala last May as a good example of an initiative aimed at addressing just these challenges. We believe the workshop provided an important opportunity to engage African leaders on questions of refugee protection and security, and we wonder whether Mrs. Ogata could comment on whether efforts have been made to follow up on this meeting. We would likewise welcome comments from the High Commissioner on recent experiences in gaining and maintaining access to populations of concern in Africa and ask whether she has identified any lessons learned in this regard.

In terms of creative approaches which the Council might take to enhance refugee protection, we should recall that, in February, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. This report is expected shortly, and we trust it will offer practical suggestions for the Council that might enhance protection for civilian populations caught up in African struggles. We look forward to the Council's taking up the Secretary-General's recommendations under the presidency of the Netherlands in September.

While we demand greater efforts in protection and assistance for the displaced, we must also recognize that refugees and internally displaced persons are only a symptom of more profound political crises. The humanitarian community will of course continue to respond to humanitarian crises and meet the immediate needs of the displaced, albeit with increasing difficulty. However, without political action to resolve the causes of such displacements, humanitarian assistance can only act as a palliative.

We must, therefore, be more creative and more proactive in addressing the causes of humanitarian emergencies, both in Africa and elsewhere. It is critical that efforts increase to help find political solutions to what are too often simply written off as intractable conflicts. This is especially true for so-called forgotten wars. Furthermore, once political settlements are found, the international community must sustain its attention beyond the dictates of the six o'clock news to help nurture effective reconstruction and reconciliation so that sustainable peace can be established, including through the development of national and regional capacity in conflict-prevention activities.

The role of the Security Council and regional organizations is absolutely critical in this regard. Canada has long believed it essential that the Council accord equal attention to security concerns irrespective of where they occur. I am well aware that some believe that Africa's conflicts are neglected in favour of those in Europe. That perception must never be allowed to take root or the very premise of this Organization will be called into question.

Indeed, while much of the Council's time is absorbed by African issues, we need to focus more on both the equality and the impact of this attention. The Council's willingness to engage innovatively and effectively in new African challenges and to redress a perceived bias towards other regions will be tested in its response to calls for more robust United Nations roles in Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia/Eritrea and Angola. Canada continues to be supportive of both the new Council roles which these situations have invited and of sustained effort where we have already made significant investments in peace, such as in the Central African Republic and in Angola.

The President: I thank the representative of Canada for his kind words addressed to me.

Mr. Burleigh (United States of America): My delegation joins colleagues in expressing our deepest condolences to the people and Government of Morocco on the sad occasion of the death of His Majesty King Hassan II. His many bold and creative contributions to Middle East peace are well known and highly appreciated.

I would like once again to welcome Mrs. Ogata to the Security Council Chamber and to thank you, Sir, for organizing this meeting. It is an unfortunate and tragic fact that refugee issues often figure prominently in the complex matters of international stability which daily face this Council. We are therefore always grateful to Mrs. Ogata for her briefings on refugee situations.

First, I would like to applaud Mrs. Ogata's commitment to refugees around the world, as well as her dedicated efforts to acquire first-hand information about the plight of refugees and international efforts to assist them. Similar appreciation should go to the staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) around the world; they are on the front lines of many crises and I hope that Mrs. Ogata can convey our sincere appreciation to them.

Last week, Mrs. Ogata was in Washington for consultations on current refugee emergencies, notably those across the African continent. Prior to that, as she just informed us, Mrs. Ogata was in Algiers for the summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), seeking the cooperation of heads of State on such critical issues as humanitarian access, and she has recently completed another fact-finding visit to the Great Lakes region of Africa.

Every one of us in this Chamber recognizes that humanitarian needs in Africa are quite substantial and that there are many obstacles to meeting them, from programming levels to logistical access. We agree with Mrs. Ogata that it is not by criticizing aid to victims in

Kosovo that those obstacles in Africa will be overcome. We must instead look at the international community's response to the Kosovo crisis, take inspiration from what has proved possible and then work together to ensure that the same positive results are achieved in Africa.

Mrs. Ogata has spoken of the opportunity that springs from the peace processes in Sierra Leone and in Congo. My Government has been actively involved in facilitating the peace processes in these and other conflicts in Africa. In May, a united effort involving Presidential Envoy Jesse Jackson; the Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), President Eyadéma of Togo; and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Francis Okelo, resulted in a ceasefire agreement for Sierra Leone. High-level United States representatives have been involved in promoting the peace process for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and our Special Envoy Howard Wolpe has been working actively with others to help resolve the situation in Burundi. In addition, former National Security Advisor Anthony Lake was in the Horn of Africa just last week to help support the OAU effort to encourage the Ethiopians and Eritreans to negotiate a settlement to their conflict. These are just some of the examples of the extent to which my Government shares Mrs. Ogata's conviction that the path to resolving refugee crises lies in finding solutions to the underlying political problems.

For nearly a decade, Sierra Leoneans have endured the horrors of a war characterized by unspeakable atrocities. With the 7 July peace agreement, we have an opportunity to support the Sierra Leoneans on their path to national recovery. Indeed, in two days, the International Contact Group on Sierra Leone will meet in London to demonstrate support for the implementation of the Lomé agreement. The Group will also consider priorities for international assistance in all of the key areas, including humanitarian aid to innocent civilian victims of atrocities; demobilization and reintegration of former soldiers; and reconstruction of the social and economic infrastructure of the country.

We expect that most, but not all, of the 450,000 Sierra Leonean refugees residing in Guinea, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire will want to return as soon as they believe that Sierra Leone is secure. The United States strongly supports the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of those refugees who want to return home as soon as possible.

We applaud the efforts of all those who realize that assistance for the humanitarian effort in Sierra Leone and throughout Africa must come from many sources. The Brookings group of major donors, including non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and the World Bank, has selected Sierra Leone as a target country for proposed partnership initiatives. These initiatives will improve both relief and development planning and programme implementation. The United Nations has also decided to make Sierra Leone a pilot case in the strategic framework process. We are confident that these efforts can be fully coordinated to help give Sierra Leoneans the peace and recovery that they deserve.

Meanwhile, significant conflicts in the Great Lakes region have affected some 4.1 million people — among them 950,000 refugees, an estimated 2.2 million internally displaced persons, more than 12,000 unaccompanied minors and 800,000 other conflict victims. In recent days, as Mrs. Ogata has detailed, the refugee numbers have increased dramatically as Congolese from Congo (Brazzaville) have fled to Gabon and many from Congo (Kinshasa) have fled to the Central African Republic.

As I mentioned earlier, the United States has been closely involved in efforts to conclude a ceasefire agreement in the Congo war. Only an end to that war and a cessation of hostilities will provide an opening for recovery and development for the people of that devastated country. Congolese refugees continue to flow to Tanzania and Zambia. Long-term insecurity in eastern Congo prevents the sustained delivery of relief assistance, raising fears that the coping mechanisms are being exhausted and that an extensive humanitarian disaster is imminent. We welcome Mrs. Ogata's report on the efforts of leaders in the region to provide humanitarian access to UNHCR and other relief entities.

The United States Government has also been intimately involved, in cooperation with the special envoys of several other nations, in seeking to bring peace to Burundi, where internal and external peace processes are ongoing. It is difficult to predict when a peace agreement will be concluded. Meanwhile, the unfortunate number of Burundian refugees in Tanzania continues to grow.

The ongoing tragic wars in Angola, in Somalia, in Sudan and between Ethiopia and Eritrea are also of great concern to the United States, as well as to this body. I

wish to express my country's grave concern that the lethal nexus of drought and conflict in the Horn, which has produced so many humanitarian crises in the past, could well reappear later this year if a lack of access to food puts desperate people on the move.

It is painfully clear that the challenges we face in the refugee area are immense and that both political instability and unforgiving environmental factors only raise the hurdles we must overcome. Yet we must not lose heart nor allow ourselves to be overwhelmed with pessimism. Our experience in Kosovo has shown that the international community, working together with a clear vision and common goal, can indeed make significant strides on the path towards repatriation and humanitarian assistance for refugees.

I am happy to inform the Council that, during Mrs. Ogata's visit to Washington last week, the State Department announced an additional mid-year contribution of $11.7 million for UNHCR's General Programmes. Of that amount, over half — $6.6 million — is for Africa. My Government looks forward with optimism to joining the rest of our colleagues in applying the positive lessons learned in Kosovo to those areas in Africa and around the world that still cry out for assistance.

In closing, let me reiterate our appreciation to Mrs. Ogata for all she and her UNHCR colleagues have done to alleviate the plight of refugees throughout the world, and reassure her of my Government's continuing support for her efforts.

The President: I thank the representative of the United States for the kind words he addressed to me.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): My delegation joins with other delegations that have expressed their condolences to the people of Morocco at the death of King Hassan II. Russia learned with great sorrow of the passing of that wise political leader who, for almost 40 years, was one of the most significant and influential Arab leaders.

We are grateful to Mrs. Ogata for her very comprehensive briefing. Russia always supports the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and regards it as an important element in the overall humanitarian activities of the United Nations. We believe that, in the present circumstances, the Security Council is being asked to provide ever increasing active political support for the work of humanitarian organizations, and it is generally believed that humanitarian work must be not only strengthened but defended by the authority of the Security Council. At the same time, we do not regard the role of the Security Council and that of the humanitarian organizations as being one and the same; each has its own part to play although, of course, in practice their tasks are closely interrelated.

We are also deeply convinced that humanitarian assistance must never be used as a means of bringing political pressure to bear on either party to a conflict. If that were to happen, such assistance would be directly in conflict with its main objective, and rather than being an effective means of stabilizing the situation and supporting the process leading to a political settlement, it would become a factor that could well aggravate the conflict.

We support the broadening cooperation and consultation between the Security Council and humanitarian organizations, in particular UNHCR, in planning and preparing for peacekeeping operations with humanitarian components. With regard to refugees and displaced persons, we are deeply concerned about certain long-standing problems about which Mrs. Ogata spoke in some detail. We agree with her assessment and her conclusions.

We agree that effective international assistance is required in many hot spots, for example in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Burundi and many other places where armed conflict has resulted in large numbers of displaced persons.

We were pleased to note that UNHCR has addressed refugee problems in the countries of the former Soviet Union. Considerable experience has been acquired from the joint work with UNHCR on implementing the Programme of Action of the 1996 Geneva Conference on refugees in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which was convened under the auspices of UNHCR. It is important that, working together with UNHCR, we were able to help interested countries, including donor countries, and the International Organization for Migration, to understand the problems of migration in the CIS region. We hope that the understanding arrived at during the meeting of the steering group of the Geneva Conference in June this year regarding the extension of its Programme of Action for the period after the year 2000 will be implemented,

which would be a step forward in resolving one of the most acute humanitarian problems.

We share Mrs. Ogata's view that the continuing difficult humanitarian situation in Kosovo is a matter for serious concern. A recent positive change, namely the return to the region of most of the Kosovar Albanians, has to some extent been negated by another acute humanitarian crisis. There is a continuing mass exodus out of Kosovo of non-Albanians, primarily Serbs and Roma people. According to some data, the total number of such internally displaced persons in the rest of the territory of Serbia and Montenegro exceeds 100,000, including a large number of women and children. They were forced to flee from violence by Kosovo Albanians, primarily the fighters of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), whose activities are in flagrant violation of the provisions of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and which has been openly squeezing non-Albanians out of Kosovo. The recent tragedy in Gracko was another tragic confirmation of this dangerous trend.

Non-Albanians who have left Kosovo find themselves in a wretched situation, which will become even worse with the advent of winter, a point also made by Mrs. Ogata. The international community must provide these people with adequate assistance. Double standards and any kind of discrimination in the humanitarian area are simply intolerable, as is any approach that would enable Kosovo to receive international assistance for reconstruction while other regions of Serbia and Yugoslavia are denied such assistance.

We believe that the international community must take action to achieve its goal of halting the exodus of non-Albanians from Kosovo. Putting in place conditions in which they can return home is directly linked to the success of KFOR efforts to ensure security and law and order in the region. These tasks were given to KFOR by Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). They include, first and foremost, the swift and complete demilitarization of the KLA. This must be done as effectively and completely as possible. Any delay or disruption could have serious and long-term consequences, destabilizing the general situation in Kosovo, not just the humanitarian situation. This would have a very negative impact on the future of the political process.

In conclusion, I should once again like to express my appreciation to Mrs. Ogata for the work she has done and for the very detailed briefing she has given us. I hope that her recommendations will be implemented in practice and that this very serious problem of refugees and displaced persons in many parts of the world will be successfully resolved.

Mr. Hamer (Netherlands): Thank you for expressing, on our behalf, the Council's profound regret and sorrow at the passing of His Majesty King Hassan II of Morocco.

My delegation is grateful to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for her briefing. We are glad that Mrs. Ogata concentrated her briefing mainly on problems in Africa. While it is perhaps inevitable, as Mrs. Ogata herself has suggested, that the situation in and around Kosovo, as a European crisis, should preoccupy its European neighbours, the Netherlands, too, is concerned that the Kosovo crisis should not detract attention from the dramatic problems besetting Africa. There are some worrying indications not only that available funds are decreasing, but also that there are problems with the deployment of personnel, both by the United Nations and by non-governmental organizations. Today's briefing reassured us that for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Africa indeed is not a lesser priority. Nor is it for the Netherlands. When allocating funds, we will do our utmost to maintain a balance, for example, by making available extra contributions for Angola to the World Food Programme and UNHCR.

A consistent approach is required when addressing post-conflict situations. Universal standards have to be applied. For instance, in the case of Sierra Leone the human rights violations call for measures commensurate with their massive scale. In that context, the Netherlands is of the view that the blanket amnesty in Sierra Leone, as provided for in the Lomé peace treaty, should be reconsidered. There is ample proof, and it is now widely accepted, that holding the perpetrators of human rights violations accountable for their crimes actually contributes to reconciliation and stability in a country. My first question of Mrs. Ogata would be whether she would agree that maintaining the principle of accountability may also have a positive impact on the voluntary return programmes for refugees.

Concerning the situation in Rwanda, the Netherlands' position has been for some time that everywhere, except in the north-west of that country, the relief phase has ended. The High Commissioner has indicated, quite rightly, that there is still a wide gap between relief and development. The Netherlands calls on

the relevant members of the United Nations family, including the Bretton Woods institutions, to work closely together to develop a coherent, common strategy for Rwanda. The results of the discussions in the Brookings process need urgent implementation in that country.

The Netherlands is especially concerned about the fate of displaced children, including child soldiers, and welcomes cooperation between UNHCR and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). In the view of the High Commissioner, can these two organizations together, in cooperation and with the Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict, muster the required expertise to rehabilitate these child soldiers?

The Netherlands is concerned also about the situation of internally displaced persons in Angola, who are not — or who are insufficiently — accessible for humanitarian organizations, as a consequence of the hold of UNITA on provincial capitals. Also, assistance is obstructed by attacks on relief convoys and targeted attacks against relief workers. It is essential that the Government of Angola and UNITA both cooperate with UNHCR in the delivery of emergency relief assistance to all areas.

Many humanitarian problems have an international peace and security dimension. In his 1998 report on the causes of conflict in Africa, the Secretary-General urged the establishment of an international mechanism to assist host Governments in maintaining the security and neutrality of refugee camps. In this context, we welcome the initiative launched by UNHCR to address security issues among Burundian refugees in Tanzania, a country faced with dramatically overcrowded camps.

I would like to conclude with a last question to Mrs. Ogata, concerning the effects of the continued fighting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by rebel militias. Could the High Commissioner comment on reports concerning the departure of several thousands of Hutu combatants, especially ex-FAR and interahamwe, from refugee camps in Congo (Brazzaville) to be subsequently recruited, trained, armed and deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Richmond (United Kingdom): I should like to begin by extending the British Government's condolences to King Mohamed VI and his family and to the Government and people of Morocco on the death of King Hassan II. I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to his many achievements, notably his tireless efforts to promote peace in the Middle East.

I would also like to thank Mrs. Ogata for an extremely helpful briefing. It is right that we are reminded of the number and the scale of the refugee problems in Africa, and of what is expected of this Council and the international community as a whole. The recent crisis in Kosovo has not altered in any way the British Government's determination to assist with the problems of Africa. Our bilateral funding commitments to Africa remain strong, and our regular contributions to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), most recently $10.5 million last March, are largely unearmarked, so allocation is a matter for UNHCR.

In light of the agreements signed in Lomé and Lusaka — which, as Mrs. Ogata has pointed out, are a real opportunity to bring those long-standing conflicts to an end — I have one or two questions which I would like to raise.

First of all, does UNHCR already have plans in place to assist the refugees currently in Guinea and elsewhere to return home to Sierra Leone? Has the process already begun, or, if not, what are the main conditions which need to be fulfilled before refugee return can begin?

Second, the news that UNHCR has resumed the repatriation of Rwandan refugees is extremely welcome, but I would like to ask whether UNHCR anticipates problems over screening for ex-FAR and interahamwe, and if so, what arrangements are in place to deal with this problem.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I wish to express my sincere condolences, and those of my delegation, to the delegation of Morocco and to the people and Government of Morocco on the passing of His Majesty King Hassan II, whose policies were essential in creating a positive climate in the Middle East conflict and in other regional situations.

I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the professional and efficient way in which you are conducting the work of the Council. I wish to thank you for convening this formal meeting. We hope that this will become a frequent practice for the benefit of other Members of the United Nations, in particular whenever senior Secretariat officials present reports on the main topics being considered by the Security Council.

We wish to express to Mrs. Ogata our gratitude for her statements, and also we wish to express our appreciation to her and to the whole staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for their dedicated work. Her words further bolstered the view that the Security Council should devote as much attention as possible to the humanitarian aspects of conflicts. This is compatible with the essential functions of the Council. At the present time, the concept of peace and security includes also elements of justice, human rights and development. This qualitative evolution should be followed carefully, since it offers an innovative way of improving the well-being of peoples and insuring a lasting solution on solid bases for most of the internal conflicts which the Security Council has on its agenda.

Those conflicts are the ones that result in the largest number of refugees, internally displaced persons and massive human rights violations, according to the Security Council's records and the reports of the Secretary-General. In order to resolve such conflicts, systematic action is required. This means dealing simultaneously, to the extent possible, with the political, humanitarian and economic causes in the country and in the region where the problem exists.

In this connection, Africa's problems are no different from those of other regions. As indicated in the Algiers Declaration of 14 July last, those conflicts are vestiges of the East-West conflict and are fuelled by a precarious economic situation and weak Government institutions. While the lack of resources makes the situation even worse, it is necessary, first of all, in order to encourage investments and other economic measures, to establish an appropriate political framework that will allow for the optimum utilization of humanitarian assistance. In this context, we wish to congratulate the World Food Programme on the recently approved emergency operation in the amount of $106 million to assist five African countries.

The task is enormous, and the figures speak volumes. In the report of the Secretary-General of 15 July on the preliminary deployment of the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, mention is made of the fact that in addition to the 700,000 internally displaced persons in its territory there are 300,000 refugees. Mrs. Ogata has just provided us additional information about the situation in other countries of the region. We trust that resources commensurate with needs will be available in order to dispel the impression that there is less concern about the problems of Africa. It is fitting, therefore, to congratulate Mrs. Ogata for devoting more than 40 per cent of available resources to deal with emergencies in that continent.

While the Lomé agreement, aimed at putting an end to the conflict in Sierra Leone, and the Lusaka agreement on the Democratic Republic of the Congo open up major opportunities, we must ask ourselves what we can do here in the Security Council to cooperate with UNHCR and the various humanitarian organizations.

On the one hand, the Council could help to prevent and contain humanitarian disasters in Africa through decisive action in conflicts that appear on its agenda. The task of preventing humanitarian crises could be included in a broader context of peacekeeping and peace-building. Clearly there is an interdependence among human rights violations, humanitarian crises and threats to peace and security. As a consequence, humanitarian action is increasingly related to peacekeeping and peacemaking activities.

On the other hand, the Council could carefully monitor, in an ongoing manner, the peace agreements mentioned. It is important to ensure that the link between poorly resolved conflicts, the humanitarian problems they cause and underdevelopment does not re-establish conditions that promote renewed and intensified fighting and humanitarian abuses of the civilian population.

For all of these reasons, expert personnel must be involved in the humanitarian task of development and reconstruction, in accordance with the mandate of the Security Council and in accordance with the Charter. It is therefore important to provide the utmost security to the humanitarian personnel carrying out their work in conflict or post-conflict areas. We wish once again to reiterate the need for the Governments and parties involved in those States that host United Nations and humanitarian personnel to respect international law and the relevant conventions. The Security Council should invite such parties to state unambiguously their readiness to act accordingly.

Lastly, the parties to conflicts should recognize that acceding to and pledging to respect conventions and the relevant legal instruments, *inter alia* in the field of humanitarian affairs, human rights and economic issues, is a necessary first step to demonstrate to the international community, to donors and to other interested parties that they have truly decided seriously to embark upon a forward-looking path of reconstruction.

The President: I thank the representative of Argentina for the kind words he addressed to me.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Malaysia.

Malaysia joins the other members of the Council in expressing its most profound condolences to His Majesty King Sidi Mohamed VI and to the Government and people of Morocco on the passing of the great leader King Hassan II, leader of the faithful, whose contributions to international peace will always be remembered by many around the world. May the blessings of Allah be upon him.

Let me also join the members of the Council who spoke before me in welcoming Mrs. Ogata and commending her for her comprehensive and forthright briefing on the refugee situation in Africa and her equally pertinent remarks on the situation in Kosovo. We particularly appreciate the remarks on the problem of the disparity between the two situations. I am sure that these will be reflected upon by the Council and by members of the international community as it continues to consider these and other situations.

Mrs. Ogata has highlighted both the positive aspects of the refugee problem in Africa and some of the less positive aspects — the remaining problems which need to be addressed by the international community, including the Council. It is true that many of those views had been highlighted previously, but they bear repeating, as was done in her presentation. Clearly the work of the High Commissioner for Refugees is very much relevant to the work and responsibility of the Council insofar as they relate to the successful implementation of peacekeeping operations and related work in respect of the implementation of peace agreements and the rehabilitation of countries and peoples caught up in conflicts.

Mrs. Ogata has rightly said that the existing problems in Africa can be solved if there is the political will and determination by African leaders to resolve African problems. It is, however, important — and Mrs. Ogata has stressed this — that these achievements and breakthroughs be sustained and strongly supported by the international community, particularly the Council. Fear of financial costs of international intervention should not inhibit us from making the necessary commitments and supporting peace agreements concluded among African countries that had found themselves in conflict situations.

Mrs. Ogata has also drawn the attention of the Council to the fact that the situation in many parts of Africa is still fragile, that even as peace agreements are being forged the window of opportunity might not remain open for long, and that the international community and the Council in particular must seize the opportunities when they present themselves.

These are, indeed, weighty words coming from Mrs. Ogata, who — unlike members of the Council, who are mostly concerned with these issues on an abstract level — has grappled and continues to grapple with this refugee issue and related problems virtually on a daily basis. As she briefed the Council fresh from her extended field trips to Africa, her words have a particular resonance as the Council considers the important peace agreements that have just been concluded in Sierra Leone and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, even if, in the latter case, not all the parties have put their signatures to the agreement. It is the hope of my delegation that the Council will not be found wanting in supporting the implementation of these agreements and of other agreements that we hope will be concluded in the future.

We should remind ourselves that international involvement in Africa has not always been negative: there have been some successes. But unfortunately, the failures have most often attracted attention. Of course there is a need to learn from both if we wish to remain continuously engaged in Africa. Briefings of this nature, followed by frank and in-depth exchanges of views between members of the Council and people such as Mrs. Ogata, heads of United Nations and other international agencies, on issues of importance and relevance to the Council have proven to be extremely useful. We all know that the realities of intra-State conflicts are complex. Clearly, interventions can be and often are difficult and even dangerous, but very often such interventions cannot be avoided if we are to prevent humanitarian catastrophes and the insidious spread of instability. We feel that if the Council is to live up to its Charter-mandated responsibilities it cannot shy away from involvements which often times require robust and substantive intervention.

In conclusion, Malaysia shares the views that have been expressed by Council members this morning and will therefore not repeat them. This includes some of the questions that I myself had wanted to raise. I am sure that Mrs. Ogata will find time to respond to some of these.

I join other members in paying gracious tribute to you, Mrs. Ogata, and to your organization for the outstanding work that you have done in the name of our common humanity. It is my delegation's hope that your important briefing and your strong appeal for continued, strong and sustained support for the work of your Office, particularly in the context of the implementation of peace agreements in Africa, will be particularly relevant as the Council continues to consider these issues in coming days. I thank you once again for your briefing.

I now resume my function as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to Mrs. Ogata to respond to comments and suggestions raised by members.

Mrs. Ogata (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees): Let me start by thanking the members of the Security Council for their interest in and support of the kind of work my Office and my colleagues, especially in the field, are doing. I think that if I relay the Council's interest, questions and observations, these people will be very much encouraged. I think it is an enormously encouraging thing to know how much the Security Council itself looks at humanitarian issues as an extension of its own responsibilities and interests. Refugees are mostly victims of conflicts of the kind that I very much expect the Security Council to be in a position to solve.

Given the limited time, I shall just say a few things on the general question of security, on follow-up to Security Council resolution 1208 (1998) and on the ladder of options. We have been following up very closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. We have done the study. There are certain options that we ourselves, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees can do; we call them the soft options. They range from trying to set up camps away from the borders, to having assistance and distribution systems that are as fair and as transparent as possible, to trying to keep the camps civilian in character. This is the most difficult challenge, but I think that in the case of situations such as those in Guinea or in Albania we tried our very best to maintain the civilian character of camps, preventing arms or armed elements from coming in.

As to the "medium" options, what exactly have we done? We have taken steps to help train local police. We have done that in Kenya, and also in Tanzania, giving equipment, radios, vehicles and also some support — incentives — to the police so that at least the refugee camps themselves will be free of armed activities and military training. That is one concrete thing that we have done. I think we have also placed some liaison officers. We did this during the crisis in Zaire. We had liaison officers in Zaire to supervise the training of some of the law-and-order maintenance forces. Also we have put a liaison officer in Tanzania. And I think here we would like to get more support from donors. I think there is room for improvement, because there is a common understanding that we should maintain the civilian character of all refugee camps.

When it comes to the question of the "hard" option — that is, how much we rely on international peacekeeping forces and to what extent can we quickly bring in international police contingents, be it in Kosovo or in many other areas that are coming up in Africa — I would really like to seek the Council's very positive and imaginative ideas and action.

As regards regional peacekeeping forces, we have entered into much greater consultation with the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), trying to bring some kind of a humanitarian component to their operations. I do not know how the ECOMOG forces are going to fare in the future, but I think that it is extremely important for there to be regional peacekeeping forces with which we can link up and for us to have more input into humanitarian aspects.

What I am trying to say today in the African context is that, yes, there is some possibility for there to be a ceasefire and peace. I think it is up to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and also to the United Nations to come up with back-up systems. How can you really force the peace that is looming? This is where I would follow and expect the Council's input.

With the OAU we have had very close working relations, especially as this is the thirtieth anniversary of the OAU Refugee Convention. And it is in this spirit that we have worked closely with the OAU, trying to make sure that international protection is given to refugees in Africa and that adequate assistance is given to them. This has not necessarily always been easy; however, we have good working relations, especially last year, when the OAU and UNHCR hosted the Kampala meeting in May. We felt that progress was made, at least on the question of which way to go — that is, protection of refugees, refugee and humanitarian principles to be observed, and how to ensure that national security is not jeopardized by

the presence of refugees. This is a question that still lingers.

However, the immediate follow-up to the Kampala meeting was made difficult especially by the resumption of conflict in the Congo since August. This is why the ceasefire is a very important step from my point of view. It may be a way to get greater support for enforcing a ceasefire in such a way that the basic objectives of the Kampala meeting can be really attained.

There was a question about how to get safe corridors and how to get assistance to refugees. This really depends on how much assurance we can get from the parties in conflict that this access will be respected. This is a point about which I appealed very strongly to President Kabila just two weeks ago.

There were several specific questions that I think I should address. Regarding funding, I am very pleased that members have shown their great concern for this matter. Our total budget for Africa for 1999 is $302 million. This comprises $137 million for the general annual programme, for which we get funds and allocate them from our side, and $165 million for special programmes, that is, country-specific appeals. For the special programmes which cover the specific programmes for the Great Lakes region, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, the Horn of Africa and Angola, the response has barely reached 25 per cent. For the general programme we have received a 62 per cent response as of 13 July.

We would really appreciate greater awareness of the importance of funding for African refugees. In Sierra Leone, Liberia and north-west Somalia, operations are on the brink of being paralysed because of the very, very limited funding that we have received. Funding is crucial to consolidating peace as well as to the care and maintenance of refugees in countries, whether of asylum or of origin, which have not come to a point that allows them to return. I think most of the solutions for refugee problems on a large scale take the form of repatriation, but there are many important local integration programmes too, and some resettlement programmes. So funding is a very important aspect of members' attention because, as several have said, consolidation of peace depends a lot on funding.

Linking poverty issues in Africa with conflict resolution also requires some financial backing, and the linkage of humanitarian assistance to development procedure also has very important funding implications. So I think this is a very important area, especially since all the operational activities of the United Nations do depend on voluntary contribution. I would also like the Security Council to promote the funding aspect as a way to implement its peace initiatives.

Now, regarding a couple of specific problems that you have asked about. As far as repatriation is concerned in Sierra Leone, we are setting up some field offices in the northern border areas inside Sierra Leone. My representative in the country has been given the task of humanitarian coordinator, and he has recently gone to the rebel-held areas. He will be then going to this meeting in London, and I hope that there will be more concrete agreements on how we carry out the agreed upon repatriation. I think that as long as peace holds — and it is good that it is holding — refugees will go back. I do not think a rapid massive return of the kind that we saw in Kosovo will take place there.

With respect to my view on the amnesty clause with regard to the Lomé agreement, I have to be honest. I am not in a position to express my views on an agreement that was concluded between two parties. I think the basic view is that peace is very important. When I was visiting Sierra Leone and Guinea and talking with the refugees in various places, they wanted peace.

On the question of Rwanda and the Rwandan refugee repatriation, the arrangement made is that there will be a collection point in the Kivu area. I do not know where the points are, but there will be several collection points where people who want to return will go, and they will have to be disarmed. They will disarm themselves and go to collection centres. As long as these two conditions are met, they will be taken back to Rwanda. We will support their transportation, and the Rwandan Government has agreed to take them. So there is no need for screening. The fact that they give up arms and go to the collection centre is an expression of their will to return.

In the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), the arrangement is considerably different, and we are still negotiating the details. But there will be a place identified in the northern part of Congo (Brazzaville) which will require people to end their involvement in the conflict near Brazzaville and to go away. Of course, there too they will have to be disarmed when they go to these places. They will be given one-time assistance, and they will have to engage in peaceful activities, such as farming and so forth. So the fact that they will be leaving the

areas in which conflict participation is possible is another sign of giving up their intention to continue fighting.

We have tried screening a lot, both in Congo (Brazzaville) and in the various neighbouring countries, and it has been very difficult. So de facto practical separation is what we have come to, and I think as far as those who have continued to fight or to be armed are really excluded from international protection. I think this is the way we are interpreting it.

On the Gabon situation, we are certainly looking into what members have asked about, and we will see what kind of arrangements we can set up.

On the question of child soldiers, those Congolese who have gone to the Central African Republic are a mixed group. There are soldiers, there are civilians and there are some child soldiers. We are trying to reach the child soldiers, but it is a very complicated issue, because UNHCR does not deal with soldiers. At the same time, they are children, so what should be done? It is a new kind of a concrete situation that we are just facing now, and certainly we will have to consult with our other partners, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the United Nations Children's Fund and, of course, the Central African Republic itself. So this is a very complex issue. In demobilization of child soldiers, who takes what kind of action is something which still requires further examination.

On the question of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we have 25,000 in Zambia and about 80,000 in Tanzania, and recently this group that went to the Central African Republic has been a very worrying one. The refugee outflow to Tanzania from both Burundi and the Congo is giving Tanzania a very heavy burden, as is often the case.

I hope I have covered most of your questions. If I have not, I will be happy to respond bilaterally after the meeting. Let me thank you very much again for your questions. I think the questions give us a lot of food for thought too as we carry on our operations.

The President: I thank Mrs. Ogata for the clarifications and answers she had provided. There are no further speakers left on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.